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BIRTH PREPAREDNESS SCHOOLS OPEN UNDER “PARTNERSHIP FOR HEALTHY MOTHERHOOD-FUTURE OF ASTANA”

March 2, 2007, Astana – Today marked the official opening of three Birth Preparedness Schools, created under the “Partnership for Healthy Motherhood-Future of Astana” Project sponsored by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and ExxonMobil Kazakhstan, Inc. The project is implemented by the USAID-funded ZdravPlus II Project and the Kazakhstan Association of Family Practitioners in cooperation with the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan, as well as the Akimat and Health Department of Astana city.

At the ceremony, U.S. Ambassador John Ordway said, “The U.S. Government is proud to support the fourth joint Global Development Alliance Project in partnership with ExxonMobil Kazakhstan and the Ministry of Health. Whether reducing unnecessary medications and procedures during pregnancy, or reducing unnecessary blood transfusions for infants and young children, all of us have a crucial role to play in ensuring the quality of health care for women and children. Although our collaboration has led to positive results, the tragic pediatric HIV outbreak in South Kazakhstan oblast demonstrates that much work remains to be done.”

“ExxonMobil is committed to strengthening local capacity in the communities where we work,” said Patricia Graham, ExxonMobil Kazakhstan, Inc. Government Relations and Public Affairs Director. “By supporting projects that focus on enhancing health conditions and providing additional training opportunities for primary health care providers, we can help raise living standards and further societal progress and economic growth.”

The first Birth Preparedness Schools began to operate in July 2006 at the City Perinatal Center and Maternity Hospital #1. Since opening, 2000 pregnant women have already attended training courses at the schools. The third school, organized under the Demeu Family Medicine Center, is ready to open and awaits its first visitors at the beginning of March. The project “Partnership for Healthy Motherhood-Future of Astana” is based on the World Health Organization’s Safe Motherhood Strategy aimed at the reduction of maternal and child morbidity and mortality. Improvement of maternal and child health is one of the priority objectives of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Kazakhstan in accordance with the **National Health Care Reform and Development Program in Kazakhstan 2005-2010**.

In 2007, USAID and Exxon Mobil intend to continue cooperation to improve knowledge and skills of medical personnel, support schools in meeting high standards, and educate the community on reproductive health issues.

Information

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Exxon Mobil Corporation is the world's leading oil and gas company operating through its affiliates in almost 200 countries around the globe, including Kazakhstan. One of the company's core strategies is contributing to the development of communities where it has a presence.

Website: www.exxonmobil.com

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries worldwide. Website:

<http://centralasia.usaid.gov>

Abt Associates, Inc. is a U.S.-based consulting firm that has been working to strengthen the health care system in Central Asia since 1994. Currently, Abt Associates implements the **ZdravPlus** project with funding from USAID. Website: www.abtassociates.com; www.zplus.kz

The Kazakhstan Association of Family Physicians (KAFFP) advocates for strengthening family medicine and primary health care, supporting and promoting high quality health care services to the population. KAFP was funded in 1998 and currently works through 15 branches and more than 800 active members. Website: www.kzfamilydoctor.org